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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 003678

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/30/2010

TAGS: [PREL](#) [SY](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER COMPLAINS OF SYRIA'S
ATTITUDE TOWARD IRAQ

REF: BAGHDAD 3668

Classified By: ACTING POLITICAL COUNSELOR MICHAEL J. ADLER, FOR REASONS
1.4 (B) AND (D)

[11](#). (C) In the course of a broader September 5 discussion with poloffs (reftel), Deputy FM Albayati decried the Syrian Government's attitude toward Iraq. Albayati said that during a recent visit, a Syrian delegation refused to accept responsibility for poor control of its border with Iraq, seeking to deflect blame toward the U.S. and UK. Albayati said the delegation rebuffed GOI efforts to discuss potential Syrian measures aimed at preventing the entry of foreign fighters into Iraq. Albayati commented disdainfully that Syria is one of the most difficult countries in the world to enter, yet claims that it is unable to control who departs its territory across the Iraqi border.

[12](#). (C) Albayati noted Syria's readiness to resort to political blackmail in a variety of contexts. He recounted a recent incident in which Syria threatened to withdraw all border guards from the frontier if "four Syrian intelligence officers", who had been arrested by Iraqi border guards, were not immediately released. (He said that the individuals were subsequently let go by the Iraqis.) As another example, Albayati said the Syrians raised the possibility of normalization of relations with Iraq and even asked for a suitable Embassy site in the green zone. In response to positive signals from Baghdad, however, the GOS drew back and demanded a high level visit by either President Talabani or PM Ja'afari to Damascus. Al-Bayati said that the Iraqis would not agree to such a visit absent tangible improvements in the border control situation.
Satterfield